The Builder.

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NEW street-fronts are now raised, either in London or the provinces, without an attempt to render them in some degree ornamental, and it is undeniable that the aspect of our streets is considerably improved. In all the new thoroughfares recently opened, pains have been bestowed, if not always successfully, to produce elevations novel and pleasing, shewing a regard for the beautiful as well as the useful. A hundred years ago Savage said in his poem "Of public spirit in regard to public works:"—*

"Tho' no proud gates, with China's taught to vie,
Magnificently useless strike the eye;
(Useless, where rocks a surer barrier lend,
Where seas encircle, and where fleets defend)
What tho' no arch of triumph is assigned
To laurell'd pride, whose sword has thinned mankind;
Tho' no vast wall extends from coast to coast,
No pyramid aspires sublimely lost;
Yet the safe road through rocks shall winding tend,
And the firm causeway o'er the clays ascend:
Lo! ample streets, Lo! ample squares invite,
The salutary gale, that breathes delight;
Lo! structures mark the charitable soil
For casual ill; maimed valour; feeble toil:"—

Since then, although a dark period intervened, our streets have been getting wider, our squares *more* ample, our roads and ways improved to an extent at that time not dreamt of, and withal there has been a growing desire to combine ornament with utility in the houses of the commonalty, and improve appearance without lessening convenience.

The fears expressed by Pope to Lord Burlington were not wholly vain when he said:—

"Yet shall, my Lord, your just and noble rules
Fill half the land with imitating fools;
Who random drawings from your sheets shall take,
And of one beauty, many blunders make.
Load some vain church with old theatric state,
Turn arcs of triumph to a garden gate;
Reverse your ornaments and hang them all
On some patch'd dog-hole ek'd with ends of wall,
Then clap four slices of pilaster on't,
That, laced with bits of rustic, makes a front."

What Pope feared, did really take place, and this recipe to make an elevation, under various disguises, was followed until it ceased to have effect. The public, however, having become accustomed to external adornment, looked to have it, and continued efforts have since been made to improve street architecture. If we compare the new squares and crescents in the neighbourhood of Hyde-park, Pimlico, and Brompton, for example, with the "Paragons," &c., of thirty or forty years ago, we shall be compelled to acknowledge that a considerable improvement has taken place. Colman, in his "Eccentricities," has some lines on suburban architecture, under the title of "London Rurality," which recur to us so strongly, and are so accurate, that, in our present quoting mood, we cannot refrain from giving them. He says:—

"Stretching, round England's chief Emporium, far,
(No rage for Building quench'd by raging War,)
What would be Villas, rang'd in dapper pride,
Usurp the fields, and choke the highway side!
Peace to each swain, who rural rapture owns,
As soon as past a toll, or off the stones!
Whose joy, if buildings solid bliss bestow,
Cannot, for miles, an interruption know:
Save when a gap, of some half dozen feet,
Just breaks the continuity of street;
Where the prig Architect, with style in view,
Has dol'd his houses forth, in two by two;
And rear'd a Row upon the plan, no doubt,
Of old men's jaws, with every third tooth out.
Or where, still greater lengths of taste to go,
He warps his tenements into a bow;
Nails a scant canvas, propt on slight deal sticks,
Nick-nam'd Veranda, to the first floor bricks;
Before the whole, in one mug segment drawn;
Claps half a rood of turf he calls a lawn;
Then chuckling at his lath-and-plaster bubble,
Dubs it the Crescent,—and the rents are double."

We hope before long to commence a series of notices of the new parts, and to follow out the foregoing brief remarks.

We have lately received communications from several correspondents on the want of attention generally manifested at this moment to classic architecture,—gothic architecture engrossing it wholly. The most recent of them, who signs himself "A constant reader and admirer," says:—

"Can you inform me whether there is any publication giving plates and descriptions of the works of Sir John Vanbrugh? Surely the architect of Blenheim is as well deserving of paper and printing as many whose works are in the hands of all architects. We have a 'Glossary of Architecture' (so called), which is simply a collection of Gothic details; but we have no work giving in an equally accessible form the beauties of Italian architecture, as exemplified not only in the works of artists in Italy, but also in those of the master minds of our own country, such as Jones, Wren, Vanbrugh, Burlington, &c. Without intending to deny the beauty and merit of Gothic architecture, I cannot but regret that so little pains should be taken to popularize the other *and purer styles*. The mania just now is for Gothic architecture only; and this may be (and doubtless is) greatly owing to the circumstance, that the only books on architecture which are sufficiently cheap, and sufficiently brief, to suit the means and time of the general reader, are on that style. The consequence is that as he knows nothing of any other styles, he is glad to assume that there is nothing worth knowing therein."

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact, as stated, that little or no attention is paid at this time by writers, investigators, or students in England, to any style but Gothic; and are disposed to think, notwithstanding the great admiration with which we regard the works of the middle ages, and our conviction of the great superiority of gothic architecture for ecclesiastical purposes over all others, that harm will be done by pursuing this course.

In reply to our correspondent's very pertinent inquiry as to Vanbrugh's works, we are ashamed to say there is no book which adequately illustrates them.* Vanbrugh was ill-appreciated, and most unjustly treated by his contemporaries. Walpole's strictures on him, unjust, and reprehensible as they were, passed current for some time. Judge:—

"What Pope said of his comedies," wrote Walpole, "is much more applicable to his buildings:

How Van wants grace!

Grace! He wanted eyes, he wanted all ideas of proportion, convenience, propriety. He undertook vast designs, and composed heaps of littleness. The style of no age, no country, appears in his works; he broke through all rule, and compensated for it by no imagination. He seems to have hollowed quarries, rather than to have built houses; and should his edifices, as they seem formed to do, outlast all record, what architecture will posterity think was that of their ancestors? The laughers, his contemporaries, said, having been confined in the bastile, he had drawn his notions of buildings from that fortified dungeon. That a single man should have been capricious, should have wanted taste, is not extraordinary. That he should have been selected to raise a palace, built at the public expense for the hero of his country, surprises one. Whose thought it was to load every avenue to that palace with inscriptions, I do not know; altogether, they form an edition of the Acts of Parliament, in stone. However partial the court was to Vanbrugh, every body was not so blind to his defects. Swift ridiculed both his own diminutive house at Whitehall, and the stupendous pile at Blenheim; of the first he says:

At length they in the rubbish spy
A thing resembling a goose pie.

And of the other;

That if his grace were not more skill'd in
The art of battering walls than building,
We might expect to see next year
A mouse-trap man chief engineer."

Vanbrugh was himself a wit, made many enemies, and was further attacked from party feeling. Pope, amongst other things, said, in allusion to his works,

"Lo! what huge heaps of bitterness around,
The whole a laboured quarry above ground."

Abuse in rhyme lasts a long time. Posterity, however, view his works differently, and almost unanimously assent to the opinion of him expressed by Reynolds in one of his discourses:—"he had originality of invention, he understood light and shadow, and had great skill in composition." Vanbrugh composed like a painter and produced most artist-like effects. His style was his own, and displays consummate knowledge of perspective, and the power of producing picturesque outline, combined with the regularity and elegance of Italian architecture. There are few works of the same class that excite a longer succession of new ideas (a great test of excellence) than Blenheim and Castle Howard; and it certainly is extraordinary, that there are not good and accessible illustrations of them, for the use of the student and the admiration of the professor.

NEW WORKS AT WINDSOR AND ETON.

RESTORATIONS are going on gradually at St. George's chapel. The open-work parapet, which is at present *of compo*, is to be reinstated in stone; Pratt's carving machine is to be employed on it. By the way, Hollar's print of the chapel (1663) shews every one of the pinnacles surmounted by a vane; these should be restored. Additional stained-glass windows have been recently inserted in the north and south aisles. Henry VIII.'s gateway opposite the chapel is under repair, and the Salisbury Tower is being rebuilt. Locke and Nesham are the contractors. Caen stone is used. A new sewer has been constructed in Windsor by the Government; the course of it is, from Frogmore to Sheet-street, and thence to the cavalry and infantry barracks, with a branch to the castle. It was proposed at first to construct a more extensive line, and that the town should contribute a portion of the cost. At a public meeting, however, which was called on the occasion, the inhabitants unwisely, as it seems to us, refused to co-operate in the matter.

At Eton College great alterations have been made. The noted long dormitory has been divided into separate apartments, and extensive ranges of chambers built in Werton's yard, so as to afford a separate sleeping room to each scholar. The new rooms are all heated by hot water. An apartment has been built to serve as a library for the use of the pupils, and is a handsome room with a large stained-glass window by Willement containing the arms of Her Majesty, the Prince, the Duke of Newcastle, the College, &c. The fittings are of deal,—they should have been of oak. Mr. Shaw is the architect, Mr. Burton the contractor. The selected drawings for the restoration of the chapel are exhibited with the

* Printed for R. Dodsley at Tulley's Head in Pall-Mall, folio, 1737.

* There is a work consisting of sixteen large engravings, by Vandergucht, Rigaud, and Baron (may be had of Weale), to illustrate Blenheim and Stowe, "with costume, &c." of the time.

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